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[1](#)B. JAKARTA 744

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Classified By: Pol/C Joseph Legend Novak, reasons 1.4(b+d).

[1](#)1. (U) This message was coordinated with Consulate Medan.

[1](#)2. (C) SUMMARY: Apparent gubernatorial victories this week in West Java and North Sumatra by the Islamic-oriented Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) were due to skillful grassroots politicking rather than direct Islamic-type appeals, political pundits agree. PKS's reinvention into a mainstream party which addresses bread and butter secular issues has reinvigorated the party. Meanwhile, Indonesia's two largest (and secular) parties acknowledged the need to review their plans and performance in the wake of the losses. Some commentators have noted that PKS is not really netting more votes for the Islamic cause, but adroitly taking advantage of splits in the secular opposition. END SUMMARY.

PKS -- PARTY OF CHANGE

[1](#)3. (C) As reported in reftels, PKS--an Islamic oriented party--has apparently won stunning victories this week in gubernatorial races in West Java (on April 13) and North Sumatra (on April 16), two of the largest provinces in the country. (Note: The counting is not yet finished in either race and formal results have not yet been announced, but PKS seems solidly ahead in both races at this point.) The apparent victories were due to a combination of factors--none of which really had anything to do with Islam, a respected Jakarta-based political consultant, Kevin O'Rourke, told DepPol/C. O'Rourke said three components stand out:

-- (1) PKS has positioned itself as change-oriented in a timeframe of rapidly rising prices and other economic/social/governance concerns;

-- (2) It has run solid, efficient campaigns; and,

-- (3) The (secular) opposition has been split and ineffective.

14. (C) In West Java, a public opinion survey by national "Kompas" newspaper published on April 14 on why people voted confirmed a popular desire "to kick the bums out." A quarter of respondents said leadership was the most important factor in their vote, while another quarter cited integrity. The hypothesis that high prices, poverty and unemployment were determining factors was born out in the fact that 42 percent said they voted based on candidates' promises to improve economic conditions. PKS also benefited from a weak opposition which failed to address economic and governance issues, political analysts we spoke with agreed.

15. (C) In North Sumatra, PKS also showed its pragmatism. The party agreed to back a former Golkar party warhorse, Syamsul Arifin, because of his strong grassroots politicking abilities--despite his shady political links, political sources told Congen Medan. For his part, Syamsul aligned himself with PKS because he needed the party to meet the five percent electoral threshold in order to run. Syamsul's running mate, Gatot Pujo Nugroho, was a moderate PKS politician who reached out to non-Muslims and Syamsul chose him for that reason. Ultimately, however, PKS won the narrow victory because of the terrible candidates which the major parties presented and because the opposition fragmented the secular-oriented vote.

PKS UPBEAT

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16. (C) PKS, naturally, is thrilled with its recent triumphs. PKS parliamentarian Zulkieflimansyah (Zul) told DepPol/C that their winning candidates in both races represented a new generation of PKS politicians. Their focus is on economic reform, social welfare, good governance, and business-friendly policy meant to attract investment and create jobs.

17. (C) According to contacts, while some PKS Islamic hardliners remain, the vast majority are now moderates--many of whom have studied abroad and returned home with a different perspective. PKS party members who participated in the USG's International Leadership Visitors Program, for example, came back with a greatly moderated world perspective, Zul added. For example, in Medan, PKS has successfully moderated the views of some students who were most stridently anti-U.S., Congen Medan confirmed. That said, other contacts have told us that PKS still contains a solid faction that is somewhat suspicious of the U.S. (due to Iraq, Israel, etc.). They also want to impose Islamic social laws (generally not a popular message in Indonesia with its moderate Muslim population).

OTHER PARTIES REACT

18. (C) In the wake of the PKS' apparent victories, Indonesia's two largest parties have acknowledged the need to draw lessons from the results in advance of next year's presidential and legislative races. The Deputy Secretary General of the largest party--Golkar--conceded that the West Java result stood as a strong repudiation of the status quo and vowed his party had absorbed the message of change. (Note: Golkar supported the incumbent in West Java, who finished a distant third.) Other Golkar contacts evinced great surprise at the result in West Java, but not because they lost. As Golkar operative Dadan Irawan told poloff, many people expected Golkar to lose, just not to the PKS

candidate.

¶9. (SBU) Senior politicians from Indonesia's second largest party--Indonesian Democratic Party-Struggle (PDI-P)--readily admitted that they were still grappling with the shock of their candidate's apparent defeat in West Java. (Note: The PDI-P backed former Transportation Secretary Agum Gumelar, the apparent second place finisher in West Java.) However, PDI-P legislator Sidarto Danusbroto told the media the loss would serve as "an invaluable lesson" for the party, and promised that PDI-P would carefully study the results for applicable lessons.

#### LOOKING AHEAD

¶10. (C) The West Java election result will not be certified until April 20 and the North Sumatra race later than that. The two key gubernatorial races that come up next are in Central Java (June 22) and East Java (July 23). PKS is clearly on a roll and reaping great success with its mainstream approach, but success in those two races is not at all assured.

¶11. (C) GOLKAR and PDI-P at this point have been warned and will no doubt work doubly hard to try to make sure they are not defeated in those key provinces. Although these two parties are no doubt having their problems, it is worth noting that they are losing basically because they are dividing the secular vote. According to observers, PKS is not really netting more votes for the Islamic cause, but adroitly taking advantage of splits in the secular opposition.

HUME